

AFTER DARK 1

The Fine Art of Ligging

It may be the 50th anniversary of the Wall Street Crash, and albums may be going up to five and a half quid, but little things like that aren't going to stop B. Geldof and his pals celebrating their latest release. **ALLAN JONES** watched the liggers paddle while London burns.



LYNOTT: "What a jolly jape . . ."

SO there I was, anyway: drifting across the pacific wastes of the pool at Putney swimming baths, sharing an inflatable rubber li-lo with a scantily-clad Chrissie Hynde.

Johnnie Fingers drifted by, pyjamas ballooning out around him in the water, flippers on his feet.

"It's not being in the water that I mind," he remarked, spluttering through mouthfuls of chlorine. "It's being in the water with all me clothes on . . ." He paddled off to get a drink.

Conceptual continuity, I think it's called — though the Rats have never been much bothered with finding justifiable excuses for offbeat ligs. Anyway, they called their album "The Fine Art Of Surfacing", and on its sleeve is a portrait of an unidentified individual crashing through the surf. So where else would they hold their après-gig splash other than a swimming pool? Nowhere, of course, is the answer.

The invitations advised their guests to bring along suitable

swimming attire. Lifeguards would be provided for those reluctant to trust themselves to the waves.

They weren't kidding, either. There was very little doubt that if you didn't enter the pool voluntarily, there would be someone (excited, probably, by an excess of alcohol) who'd bundle you into the water with an unceremonious splash, fully clothed and swearing.

THIS would all come later, though.

First there was the entertainment, provided by a group of sterling young women who performed a water ballet to a tape of "I Don't Like Mondays" and ribald cheers from the assembled partygoers. Then a troupe of clowns did silly and apparently quite dangerous things on and off the diving boards at the far end of the pool.

A number of more intrepid liggers were already in the pool. These did not include the correspondent from the New Musical Express, who made a hasty exit when things began to get a little rowdy and out-of-hand. The editor of Record Mirror, a Mr Martin, was among the first to strip off and dive in, however. As was Chris Hill, the A&R ears at Ensign: he was down to his jockey shorts and up to his neck while most of us were still at the bar contemplating a quick dip.

Chrissie Hynde and the Bishop's girl were among those wondering whether to dare all or make a quick getaway. For someone who'd recently stripped down to the nail varnish for Penthouse, Paula was surprisingly reluctant to nip into her swimming knickers. Chrissie Hynde didn't have any swimming togs with her, but was quite unperturbed. She said she'd strip off to her knickers and tee shirt and jump in regardless. Paula looked at her aghast.

"Not in front of my boyfriend, you won't, you brazen hussy," Ms Yates commented tartly.

Geldof, meanwhile, announced that he was going in. He went off to the changing rooms and reappeared in a Fiorucci singlet and a pair of shorts. His legs looked like bleached tent-poles.

"What an animal," gasped Paula. She rushed off to change, too. What the hell? I thought, and joined them, a poor impersonation of masculinity

shivering in the shallow end of the pool.

Geldof was worried. He couldn't swim. "Well, not properly," he confided. "I can swim backwards, but that's all . . ." Typically Irish, we thought.

IT was at about this point that those who'd come without their swimming things began to wish they hadn't come at all. Phil Lynott was among them.

Philip was standing at the bar with Paul Cook and Billy Idol, discussing the influence of Gaelic cooking on his work. He cut a dashing figure in black leather, set off by silver studs and glittering bracelets. Suddenly, someone had tackled him around the waist. He was flying through the air. *He was falling into the pool! Golly — he was in the pool! Thrashing around like an octopus with its arse in a sling.*

My word, he was annoyed. And he wasn't alone. Bodies were flying into the baths from all directions. Young ladies in expensive party frocks were hurled, cursing and pleading, into the murky depths. Ensign's Nigel Grainge walked off the poolside and into the pool. "Someone would've thrown me in, so I thought why not?" he gargled through a spout of H₂O.

Lizzy's Scott Gorham, not wanting to spoil an immaculate hairdo, quickly retired. So did B. P. Fallon, who last felt water upon his body the day he was christened. Chrissie Hynde, however, was true to her word. Off came her trousers and leather jacket, and in she plunged.

Tony Brainsby, the publicist for Wings, Lizzy, the Rats and other famous showbusiness personalities, was hauled from his seat beside the pool. He screamed and kicked and fought furiously. He looked as if he was being dragged to the electric chair. Violent panic consumed him. His fright was understandable. He can't swim. And they were trying to throw him into the deep end. In fact, they *did* throw him into the deep end.

He splashed about for some moments before it was realised that he was not, in fact, waving, but drowning.

The sides of the pool by now entertained throngs of shivering liggers, their clothes shrinking around them, hair plastered to their heads and



GELDOF in his Fiorucci singlet

faces, puddles like miniature lakes forming around their feet. They had to face the decidedly uncomfortable prospect of making their way home through the post-midnight chill, each footstep a squelchy reminder of the night's frolics.

Chris Hill chuckled with evil glee. "That'll teach the bastards," he giggled. "We won't see many of this lot at the next Rats' lig . . . I dunno, though. Some people will go through anything for a free drink . . ."